I:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



The modern position is quite different. Each village still produces almost all its own food, but very considerable quantities of clothing, metal utensils, and tools are imported, in addition to salt, medicines, and ornaments. All the men and some of the women wear cloth. Every man possesses at least one loin-cloth, a hoe, and an axe, and he must pay an annual tax of 12s. with an additional 2s. for every wife after the first. These essential expenses are met by the sale of produce and labour. Rungwe district is one of the main sources of food for the nearby Lupa gold-fields, while its native-grown coffee is sold on the London market. In 1936 produce to the value of some £24,000[1] was sold from Rungwe district to the outside world, and considerable quantities of produce were also sold within the district to Government officials, missionaries, traders, and their servants. At the same time an exchange of different types of produce, particularly of rice from the plains for ground-nuts from the hills, is developing, and markets flourish at several centres.

Trade is in the hands of Indians and Swahili settled in the Government station, Tukuyu, the military station, Masoko, and the Lake-shore port, Mwaya. These traders employ Nyakyusa agents on a commission basis, to sell their goods and bring in produce; and there are many small shops scattered through the district, where commercially-minded Nyakyusa sell cloth, salt, paraffin, matches, hoes, knives, tin dishes, padlocks, soap, and cigarettes; and buy produce. But the shop is not a village centre. In the first place, one shop usually serves several villages; in the second, dependence on trade-goods is not yet so great that shopping close at hand is a necessary convenience, and when a purchase is to be made the buyer often prefers to go to one of the three main trading centres where his choice is greater. There was no sign of a Nyakyusa shop serving as a meeting-place for a village or a group of villages, as does the trading store of the Transkei.[2] Tukuyu market is indeed a social centre but it attracts custom from all over Rungwe district, not merely from one village or group of villages. Trading thus draws men outside their village; it does not nourish relationships within the village.

Employment for wages is the second means of meeting essential expenses, and we estimated that in 1936 approximately

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 18.
[2] Monica Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, p. 238.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



£25,500 was earned by Nyakyusa migrant labourers and those employed in the district.[1] Earnings from employment are thus probably about equal to the total earnings from the sale of produce.

Within the district Nyakyusa men are employed in Government service as clerks, hospital orderlies, agricultural inspectors, and as labourers on roads and buildings. They are employed also as house servants by Europeans, as labourers on the twelve European-owned estates in the district, and as shop assistants and servants by Indian traders. There is also a little employment of Nyakyusa by Nyakyusa in agricultural work. Traditionally chiefs, being responsible for hoeing the fields of many wives, sometimes employed poor men to hoe for them, rewarding them after two hoeing seasons with a heifer or bull, but the extent of such employment was, in the old days, small and confined to the chiefs. Nowadays it has been considerably extended, rich men employing others to hoe or, less commonly, to plough for them, and paying them in stock or cash. A few monogamists also employ young boys to assist their wives in fetching wood and water.

Most Nyakyusa men now take paid employment at one time or another. Of a small sample of seventy-nine men, seventy-six (94 per cent) had been in paid employment. There was, however, a marked difference between the work histories of young and old, and between pagan and Christian. Of the pagan men over middle age, the majority of those who worked had not done so willingly, but had been conscripted as carriers, and the total periods for which they had worked were short, averaging under six months per man. On the other hand, all the Christian men over middle age had worked willingly, and the total period for which each had worked averaged over twelve years. Of the young men, all who had worked had done so willingly, but as with the older men, there was a marked difference between the length of time pagans and Christians spent in employment. The profession of Christianity is, amongst the Nyakyusa, correlated with education, and Christian young men, more especially the sons of Christians, tend to secure the skilled or semi-skilled jobs. Those who have skilled work tend to stay longer in a job and return home less frequently because they fear lest they may not find an equally good job again, and because they have often travelled far to find skilled

[1] Based on the estimated number of men in employment, and an analysis of wage rates within and outside the district.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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cillor said: 'Give the girl a betrothal gift.' The groom gave her 3s., and I gave the councillor 1s. Then the councillor told the chief, saying: 'The girl has agreed.' 'Thank you, tell them that they must bring four cows.'

Then they called us to eat. They put us in a house which they had prepared with many fine mats, and we sat down. They gave us four calabashes of curds, and a wooden spoon, and we were four. Then we trembled and sweat came on our bodies, especially I, because I knew that they would come to me, the go-between, and I thought 'cleverness is bad!' [i.e. his ready tongue had put him in the most prominent position]. I trembled, thinking: 'When they come to my place what shall I give them?' But the others ate joyfully. I only ate a little and with fear. Then we saw much food. Indeed, very much. What should we do? We called our wife [*sic*] and gave her one big calabash. Then we gathered together and looked at the food. What should we do? Then we called the councillor with whom we had spoken and said: 'Help us, we are defeated.'

'No. The chief will be angry, saying: "Why are you depriving them of their food?"'

Then I went to the chief and said: 'We beg people to help us, the food is so much we are overcome.' He laughed, all of them laughed. 'Are you overcome, Mwaisyelage?'

'Yes.'

Then he gave us four of his people, and they entered the house, and we gave them the curds and went off quickly because we feared lest they compel us to eat more and we should be ill. I put 50 cents in the basket which the chief's wives had brought us with calabashes. It was my 50 cents because the groom had finished what he had; he had only brought 4s. But it was not really mine, it belonged to my mother who had given it to me to buy groundnuts but I asked all of them, saying: 'Friends, who has fifty cents?' None of them had it, so I thought: 'How about this? Will my mother beat me? Is she not my mother? According to custom I will give it.' And the chief's wives accompanied us on the road and praised us, saying we were men of wisdom, because we had put 50 cents in their basket.

So on Thursday we went with four very good cows, some of them in milk. Because it is the work of the go-between to give the owner of the woman wise advice, saying: 'Choose good cattle to begin with, the weaker ones will follow.' And I told them: 'Let us be many friends; the first time he defeated us with his food; let us be many.' So ten of us went, and when they arrived they gave us six calabashes of curds with the whey drained off. They praised us because the cows were very good, but I told them: 'There is another which is sick at home, it will come when you have called your people to hoe, you will kill it to rejoice them.' All laughed and said: 'Let him bring it, it is Linolemu

6:Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1939 FN17 Ngonde FN17



is generally admitted that all chiefs are less affected by this fear than they used to be. The secularization of the constitution tends, in this connection, to make it more autocratic.

On the economic side it is difficult to exaggerate the change in the relative wealth of rulers and people. The change is temporarily obscured by the historical accident of the present Kyungu's personal fortune, but this, when he dies, will go to this own heir, not to his successor in the Kyungushíp. The Kyungu's total official salary in 1937 was £72 a year and those of the "Sub-chiefs" varied from about £4 10s. to £12 a year. The nobles of Ngonde all received either 10s. or 15s. a year, with the exception of Mulwa who received 30s. These salaries, which are paid out of the Native Treasovery, are the modern substitute for the profits of the ivory-trade, which the Kyungu shared with his subordinates, together with the regular tribute of food and the proceeds of tribal warfare and of punitive expeditions, all of which sources of income have now dried up. And these salaries do not make possible the giving of any valuable gifts to subordinates and subjects. The local rulers also receive slight financial subsidies from the Native Treasury. Each "Village Headman" is allowed to retain 3d. from the tax of every adult male subject of his own and the "Important Headmen" (great chiefs) receive in addition subsidies ranging from 5s. to 40s. a year. This custom has replaced that of the requisitioning of food; but, owing to the smallness of all the present chiefdoms and fiefs of the plain, few "Village Headmen" receive more than £1 a year from this source.[1]

It is open to commoners, on the other hand, to become as rich or richer than most of their rulers. The head clerk in the Boma in 1937 received £52 a year, and there were fifty-three other Government employees who all received £12 or over; Native Christian Ministers and Evangelists all received many times the salary of Mulwa while young men often returned from the Lupa gold-fields with savings of several pounds.

The decline of polygyny in Ngonde again reduces the relative wealth of the subordinate chiefs and nobles in comparison with their people. Women are increasingly reluctant, for various reasons, to be married by polygynists, and the old style of entertainment is changing. Few chiefs and nobles, save the present Kyungu himself, now have sufficient wives and unmarried children to be able to entertain on a large scale. In the case of ordinary chiefs and territorial nobles (the "Village Headmen" of to-day) this poverty is not in itself very significant, for with the dwindling

[1] The average receipts of the one hundred and twenty-four "Village Headmen" in the Ngonde plain were almost exactly 10/- per annum in 1936. They had, that is, an average of forty tax-payers each.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



kinsman. Though some of the reasons for his subordination are to be found in modern conditions, it is clear that many of the factors have always operated. 422

Wars did not only occur between brothers; but when one chief defeated another who was more distantly related to him, he did not, apparently ever, reduce him to a minor position: He either took his cows and then left him alone, or killed him and set up a brother of his own as an independent though allied chief, or else, more rarely, killed him, took over the country and directly incorporated it in his own. So that, apart from the subordination of a defeated brother and his heirs, political authority always stopped at the boundaries of each separate chiefdom.[10] 433 727

The traditionally independent chiefdoms to-day vary in numbers from 100 to about 3,000 adult men. 431 161

The coming of the German Administration in 1893 introduced a paramount political authority, for the first time, in the persons of European officials; while in 1926, a generation later, the British Administration created new Native Authorities under the District Officer and superior to the chiefs. The traditionally independent chiefs were grouped together in eleven court districts, in each district a "Native Court" was set up, consisting of the various chiefs and their great commoners, under the hereditary presidency of one of the chiefs, who thereby became senior to all the others in that court district. Salaries for chiefs have been introduced, and the senior chiefs receive far higher salaries than the others; while the meetings of each Court are always held in the territory of the senior chief (*omulafyale ophulumbu*); and to it has now been transferred a great deal of the legal business which, before 1926, was transacted by each chief sitting with his own great commoners in his own chiefdom. The chiefs themselves were consulted in the selection of the Court Presidents, and those chosen were normally the chiefs with the greatest number of men in each particular court district. 436 177 [465]

In this account the term *senior chief* (*omulafyale ophulumbu*) denotes the President of a Native Court, *chief* (*omulafyale*) means one of the traditionally independent chiefs, while *minor chief* (*omulafyale omunoli*) means one of the subordinate chiefs, often with only 40-60 men under him.

The introduction of Courts and salaries has brought an entirely new element into the relationship between old and young chiefs (*vide* 436 177 574

[10] Among the Konde of Nyasaland, I am told, there was a paramount chief Kyungu, with a far-reaching political authority; but there was no such chief among the Nyakyusa.

8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
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marriages of his kinswomen. When his father dies his father's wives £22
and cows pass to his father's full-brother, but they come to him and his 5:19
brother eventually when this man dies. While, if the young chiefs have
" come out " it is common for their father's brother to hand over some,
or even the bulk of the cattle, to them before his own death. And in his
own half of the family, among his siblings and half-siblings on that side,
a chief has far greater rights both of inheritance and of receiving marriage-
cattle, than those possessed by the senior son of a commoner. So much
is clear from my evidence, but it is not yet sufficiently detailed for an
exact statement of rules.

Before 1893 fighting between chiefdoms was common and, except 631
between brother chiefs, the usual aim of fighting was, not conquest, but 721
cows; wars were generally just cattle raids. And a substantial proportion
of the cows captured in a successful raid went to increase the herds of the
chief. This last source of income is now supplied by Government 635
salaries, which vary from 5/- to £15 a month.[29] The price of a cow is £2; 964
but many shillings are spent on clothes, bicycles and beer, as well as on
cows.

A chief, like any other rich man, maintains his prestige by hospitality. 622
He constantly entertains his more notable subjects with beer, at the 5:27
ceremonies of his family all his people gather in their age-villages and he
kills cattle for them to eat. Chiefs seldom nowadays kill cattle except on
ceremonial occasions, but in the old days of warfare they used also, I am
told, to entertain their subjects with meat from time to time, in order to
keep up their spirits for fighting. History is full of stories of Nyakyusa
chiefs who attracted many men to their countries, and so gained great
military strength, by the generosity and abundance of their feasts.

Every time a man or woman dies, a message must be sent to the £22
chief, and at the burial he is given the whole breast and ribs (*akaloso*) of 764
one of the cows which are killed by the family of the dead person at that
time. He has the right to take food or milk from any of his subjects if he
has need of it; but he cannot take any man's beast without later returning
another to him.

Apart from the now abandoned pursuit of cattle raiding the only £31
profitable enterprises in which the members of a whole chiefdom jointly 476
participate are those of hunting and fishing; in some chiefdoms, but not

[29] Salaries above £1 a month are only paid to senior chiefs. No minor chief gets a Government salary, nor do great-commoners. The local value of money is shown (a) by the tax (3/- p.a.), (b) by the wages of unskilled labour (6/- to 8/- p.m.)

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



in similar schools in 1958. Less than 40 per cent of the children between eight and eleven years old[1] are as yet in school in Rungwe District and the demand for places is enormous. Among the most insistent are girls wanting education. During the 1950's the Education Department was trying, with little success, to coax girls to stay in school long enough to learn to read and write, but today nearly a third of the primary school pupils are girls. A handful of boys and girls go out of the district to attend middle or secondary schools, and a few candidates for training as teachers and district nurses come in. Thus an educated person, or one who goes out to work, mixes with people whose backgrounds and languages are quite different from his own.

Then people are richer than they used to be, partly because of the wages earned abroad, and partly because of the coffee and rice grown and exported. There is also some employment within the district on tea estates (especially important to women and girls), and coal and vermiculite mines. The value of peasant crops exported has risen from about £24,000 in 1936[2] to nearly £378,000 from coffee and rice alone in 1955,[3] and some men have made as much as £150 from their coffee in a year. A coffee cheque of £30 to £60 is common. In addition to the peasant crops there is tea from estates—well over a million pounds of made tea in 1955 as well as a quantity of seed. This increase in wealth has involved a change in the division of labour. Because men are not at home to clear and hoe, their wives, perforce, must clear fields and hoe for themselves, assisted by their young sons, boys who twenty years ago would not yet have stopped herding.

There has been a rapid increase in population, more especially in the hills, due partly to the development of health services and

[1] Number of children in Mission and Native Authority schools in Rungwe District, 1955:

| Boys | Girls | Total | No. of children 8-11 years of age (estimated at 10% of total population) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6,590 | 2,054 | 8,648 | 15,839 |
| *Middle Schools* | | | |
| 718 | 73 | 791 | (This total does not include those who are in middle schools outside the District, nor does it include those following a professional course in the District) |

(Figures provided by the courtesy of the Provincial Education Officer, Mbeya.)
Change in Ngonde is not discussed for it was not possible to visit that area in 1955.

[2] *Coal Company*, p. 16.

[3] Calculated from figures kindly supplied by the District Commissioner, Mr. Peter Johnston.